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BY

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THE PULL BACK.

BY

T. S. DENISON,

*Author of Odds with the Enemy; The Sparkling Cup; Seth Greenback;
Louva, the Pauper; Wanted, A Correspondent; Initiating a Granger;
A Family Strike; Hans Von Smash; Two Ghosts in
White; Country Justice; The Assessor;
Borrowing Trouble; etc.*



CHICAGO:

T. S. DENISON

1878.

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CHARACTERS.

MRS. OLDSTYLE, very old-fashioned.

MRS. SENSENY.

HENRIETTA PRIDE,

ADELAIDE PRIDE,

} very stylish.

GERTIE PLANE.

LOU, waiter.

COSTUMES.

Mrs. Oldstyle, dress as old-fashioned as possible, and odd—spectacles and sun bonnet. Henrietta and Adelaide, dressed fashionably, with extravagant pull-backs. Other characters plainly dressed.

SITUATIONS.

R means right as the actor faces the audience; *L*, left; *C*, center.

1912
MAR 6

THE PULL-BACK.

SCENE.—*The Ladies' Waiting Room at a Railway Station. Refreshment Counter R. Young lady waiter.*

Enter MRS. OLDSTYLE and MRS. SENSENY, *L.* MRS. OLDSTYLE carrying a large old-fashioned carpet-sack, two or three parcels wrapped in newspapers, and a large cotton umbrella. MRS. SENSENY with traveling hand-bag.

Mrs. O. Laws a me! it's a desp'rit sight of bother to travel with nobody to take keer of a body's things!

Mrs. S. Allow me to assist you! (*Takes her packages and umbrella and lays them on the seat.*)

Mrs. O. Thank 'ee! I'm much obleeged to you! Goodness alive, where 's my umbarel. It 's in the kyar I'll lay! and gone too! I wonder if the conductor man would send it back to-morrow if I'd write him a letter?

Mrs. S. (*Draws umbrella from under the packages.*) Here it is, Madam.

Mrs. O. Thank 'ee, Ma'am! I'm obleeged to you. I'll just take it in my hand so as not to lose it. I've had that umbarel a matter of sixteen years and I wouldn't lose it for the best cow in the State. I paid three shillin' for that umbarel when things wa'n't half as high as they be now. But I set so much store by it because its been in the family sixteen year and never been lost, Uriah says I'm always losin' things. I always carry an umbarel because you can't tell when there'll be a spell of weather, and then it 's sort of company for a body to have something to look after. (*Bustles among her baggage.*)

Mrs. S. (*Aside.*) I don't like to be too free with strangers, but I suppose it is safe to talk to this old lady. (*Aloud.*) Are you traveling far?

Mrs. O. No, indeed! I don't travel far alone these days of robberies and smash-ups. It isn't safe. I just come up from Fogg's Corners. My name is Oldstyle, Uriah Oldstyle's wife. I've come down to Thornville to see my brother John.

Mrs. S. Perhaps like myself, you don't travel much?

Mrs. O. No, indeed! I'm real glad I stop here. What might your name be?

Mrs. S. Senseny! I stop here too. I came one train sooner than I expected, and shall be obliged to wait here a half hour before the friends who were to meet me arrive.

Mrs. O. How d'ye do Mrs. Senseny! (*Shakes hands.*) That's my fix exactly. I'm waitin' for John. I don't like travelin' in the kyars. They take a body so quick that you have to wait 'round *depots* (*Pronounce the t.*) and waste ever so much time. Last time I came in the stage, it took a whole day; but we didn't waste a minute waitin'. That's ten years ago. Law! I suppose 'Thornville has growed a heap sence then.

Mrs. S. It is a thriving little city now, Mrs. Oldstyle. But I must see to my trunks. (*Exit L.*)

Mrs. O. Goodness, I forgot! The last thing they said at home was not to make too free with strangers. I'm afeerd I told that woman more than I had ought to. What a desp'r't sight of traps some of the kyar travelers have. Sich trunks! I guess they must take their own bed and cookin' utensils along. That's handy anyway, for then a body knows where they are sleepin' and where the cookin' is done. Speakin' of cookin' puts me in mind I'm as hungry as I'd be after a day's washin'. I'll buy a piece from this girl. It looks like a nice *clean* place. (*Raps on the floor with umbrella to call waiter.*) Sis, can you let me have a piece of bread with a little apple sass spread on it?

Waiter. We don't keep apple sauce!

Mrs. O. Don't have apple sass! Why, I never heard of the like! I couldn't set a table without it, and what's more Uriah wouldn't eat if I'd set the table and not put on the apple sass.

Waiter. Won't you have a sandwich?

Mrs. O. A sand-what?

Waiter. A sandwich!

Mrs. O. What sort of a witch is that, I wonder! Bless me! I thought witches were clean out of date. I used to hear grandfather tell about their plaitin' the horses' manes, but I havn't heerd tell of them since.

Waiter. I didn't mean *witches*. Sandwiches are something to eat. Here is one.

Mrs. O. Laws a me! and them's sandwiches! (*Pulls the sandwich apart.*) A cold biscuit cut in two and a piece of meat put between. Goodness me! I've made sandwiches for forty years everytime I put up a cold snack for the hired men, only I put in a good deal bigger slice of meat than that. I'll take a sandwich and a cup of coffee.

Waiter. Here are milk and sugar for your coffee.

Mrs. O. What ails that milk! Well if it was down our way I'd say the cow drank a leetle too much spring water. (*Sits herself to eat her lunch.*)

Enter GERTIE PLANE, L.

Gertie. (*To waiter.*) Good morning, Lou!

Waiter. Good morning, Gertie! You naughty girl, why

didn't you come in sooner. I'm so lonesome. I thought you'd never come.

Gertie. Lonesome! How absurd! And customers here!

Waiter. (Aside.) She's a queer one! Look at her bonnet and her dress! And her umbrella!

Gertie. (Aside.) She looks like a nice old lady, though.

Waiter. Oh perhaps she is, but she is so queer. She made remarks about the refreshments and never heard of a sandwich.

Gertie. Hush Lou! I venture she has a kind heart. She mustn't hear us talking about her. She has never traveled much I know.

Waiter. Yes, anybody could see that. How would she look with a pull-back? Wouldn't it look jolly! ha! ha!

Gertie. Lou! Lou! *(Old lady's attention is attracted to the conversation.)*

Waiter. Gertie, I'm getting my new dress made with a pull-back. Why don't you get one, too?

Mrs. O. (Aside.) Poor girl she's makin' a new dress and there's something a hinderin' her. It's hard to work when there's something all the time givin' a body a backset.

Gertie. I'm in no hurry to adopt a fashion that looks so absurd, until others lead.

Waiter. Your cousins Henrietta and Adelaide Pride have pull-backs in the very height of the fashion.

Gertie. I know they always try to lead the fashion.

Mrs. O. Dear me! Somebody else has a backset, too! It must be despr'it discouragin'.

Waiter. Pull-backs are all the go, Gertie.

Mrs. O. (Aside.) I do wonder what's the matter. Has the whole town taken a backset? It's something dreadful, I'm sure. It must be small-pox or fever or something like that, for a backset is always worse than the first attack. *(Aloud.)* Gals, who is it that took a backset?

Gertie. A backset!

Mrs. O. Yes! It's always worse than the first attack. Sol Bruce, the Postmaster at the Corners, had typhoid fever awful bad, and just as the doctor had him out of danger he drank a cup of sour buttermilk and the backset nearly killed him.

Gertie. Of course a relapse is very dangerous in case of severe illness, but nobody is sick here that we know of.

Mrs. O. Thank goodness! Then there's no fever here?

Gertie. No Ma'am!

Mrs. O. Nor small pox?

Gertie. No Ma'am!

Mrs. O. Then I guess somebody's taken a backset in money matters. Somebody has broken up on account of these hard times?

Gertie. Yes, many have suffered reverses of fortune.

Mrs. O. Well that's not so bad as to be sick, as I was afeared they were, but it's bad enough, too, if a body has to lose their prop-

erty, though I can't say much from experience, for Uriah has been so lucky that we wouldn't miss a span of good horses as much now as we'd missed a pig when we were first married.

Enter L, HENRIETTA and ADELAIDE PRIDE followed by MRS. SENSENY. They take seats L.

Henrietta. (Aside to Adelaide.) There is cousin Gertie Plane.

Mrs. O. I declare I havn't paid for my lunch yet. (*Sets coffee cup on counter. To waiter.*) I suppose that will be about five cents. Here is a nickel. I guess you make pretty good sandwiches. You must use a heap of egg to make your coffee so clear.

Waiter. Your bill is twenty cents!

Mrs. O. Twenty cents! Havn't you made a big mistake somewhere? Maybe you multiplied instead of addin'?

Waiter. There is no mistake. One cup of coffee ten cents: one sandwich, ten cents.

Mrs. O. Laws a me! How these people about the railroads do impose on travelers! It's downright swindlin'. That's what I call it. I wanted to start with only twenty dollars, I'm so afraid of pickpockets, but my old man said I must take fifty, and goodness knows I'll need it all if the pickpockets don't get it. (*Mrs. O. goes to door and looks out Mrs. Senseny suddenly searches her pockets as if she had lost something. Gertie and Lou talk aside.*)

Henrietta. What an odd looking old lady that is!

Adelaide. Oh she's a perfect fright!

Henrietta. She ought to travel with Barnum.

Adelaide. Goodness knows she'd make a show herself.

Henrietta. Such a bonnet!

Adelaide. And such a dress!

Henrietta. Cow-hide shoes! I never!

Adelaide. Hush 'Retta, she's listening.

Henrietta. Well I don't care! I shall say what I please anyway.

Adelaide. (Aside to Henrietta.) I declare Gertie has a calico dress on. I'm surprised at her talking to that waiter.

Henrietta. I must speak to her. (*They pass over to Gertie and Lou.*)

Adelaide. Good morning girls!

Henrietta, Gertie, you seem to be very much interested. I presume you must be consulting about something of very great importance!

Gertie. Oh, no! only a friendly chat!

Henrietta. Friendly chat, indeed! Sister, let's take a walk on the platform till train time. (*Henrietta and Adelaide exit L. Lou disappears R. Gertie seated.*)

Mrs. O. (Aside.) Well! well! These two gals haven't much manners, anyway, to talk about a body right in plain hearin'. What does ail their dresses? They must have been hooked up by mistake into that pucker. I'd a mind to tell them about it. That woman keeps her eye on me and my things more than I

like. I'm afeerd I oughn't 'a told her my name. The neighbors at the corners all told me to scrape no acquaintances. She might be a female robber; I've heerd tell of sich. (*Goes to door, L.*)

Mrs. S. (To Gertie.) Have you seen a pocketbook in this room? I've lost mine. I've my suspicions, too, about where it is. I think that old lady is a suspicious character. She is entirely too free getting acquainted. I've always heard it wasn't safe to get acquainted with people on the cars. I'm sorry I said a word to her.

Gertie. I think, Ma'am, your suspicions are groundless. That old lady seems to be honest. She lacks experience in travel. That is all, I think.

Mrs. S. Oh, she *seems* very honest! Rogues always do. She looks much too honest and inexperienced. She knows more than she pretends. I'll keep an eye on her.

Gertie. It would be well, of course, to keep a lookout for your property. You will find it, I hope.

Mrs. S. To be sure I'll look out well, and she shall not elude me. I believe she hid my pocketbook in her baggage. I'll watch that. (*Sits herself by Mrs. O.'s baggage.*)

Enter L, HENRIETTA and ADELAIDE, followed by MRS. O. Waiter appears behind counter, R.

Mrs. O. (Aside.) Laws a me! I never did see dresses tangled up so; I must tell them, for people will be comin' in and see them. (*To Henrietta.*) Sis, your dress is sort of tangled up.

Henrietta. (Shakes out her train.) I see nothing the matter with it.

Mrs. O. Goodness me! It's hooked wrong somewhere. It's all tucked up into a bump.

Adelaide. (Laughing.) Oh, that's her pull-back.

Mrs. O. Her what-did-you-say?

Adelaide. A pull-back!

Mrs. O. What is it for?

Henrietta. It's the style! Everybody wears them. (*Laughs. Aside to Adelaide.*) Isn't she refreshingly verdant?

Mrs. O. And that is a pull-back! When I first heerd of them I thought it meant a back-set. A body ought to take a dictionary along now-a-days when travelin'. I thought somebody had the smallpox and had taken a back-set. But I'd no idee it was anything so dreadful as that! (*Henrietta and Adelaide laugh.*) Dear me, what is the world comin' to? (*Soliloquizing.*) I've heerd tell of fashion killin' people. I wonder if that pull-away is heavy! If it is it must be a desprit load. I'd like to know what it is made of. What's she watchin' my things for? (*Looking at Mrs. S.*) Ma'am, hadn't you better let my traps alone? You'll break my umbarel a settin' on it that way!

Mrs. S. Ah, you are suspicious of me, I'm sure of it now. When the gentleman arrives who was to meet me, I'll have you arrested. Why doesn't he come! It is time he was here.

Mrs. O. Arrested! That beats everything. People deserve it who ride on the kyars.

Mrs. S. (*Goes to refreshment stand. To waiter.*) Miss, can you tell me where Mr. Pride lives? Can't I send for him?

Mrs. O. I declare she's enquirin' for John!

Henrietta. Gracious! That's aunt Sue!

Adelaide. Why, what a surprise! Here we've been waiting for half an hour!

Henrietta. (*Kisses Mrs. S.*) How do you do, Aunt! We were'n't expecting you until next train!

Adelaide. (*Kisses Mrs. S.*) Dear Aunt! How glad we are to see you! But you must be tired! Why didn't you enquire for us at once?

Mrs. S. I didn't wish to put Mr. Pride to unnecessary trouble, and as I arrived one train sooner than I expected, I concluded to wait in the depot for a half hour!

Adelaide. Oh dear! I'm so sorry, Auntie! You must be tired waiting!

Mrs. S. (*Aside.*) It seems strange that they call me aunt so soon, considering I'm only the housekeeper. They seem very affectionate girls. (*Aloud.*) It's not of any consequence, thank you!

Henrietta. The carriage will be here in a few minutes, dear Aunt. Pa ordered it ready.

Mrs. O. (*Aside.*) These gals must be John's! And such stuck-up things as they are! Clear spiled. I'll see for sure. (*Steps to Gertie, R. They whisper. Gertie grasps Mrs. O's hand and kisses her.*)

Henrietta. Aunt, has your baggage been taken care of?

Mrs. S. My trunk is in the baggage room and my traveling bag is here. (*Aside.*) They are so kind, I know I'll like them. (*Aloud.*) But I'm sorry to say I've met with a serious loss.

Henrietta. Mercy! What is it?

Mrs. S. A pickpocket has taken my pocket-book.

Henrietta. It's too bad!

Adelaide. It's a shame!

Mrs. S. I've reason to think the thief is not very far away at the present moment.

Mrs. O. (*Slightly angry.*) Ma'am you're hintin' a leetle too strong, in my opinion. If you've anything to say agin' a body, speak it right out!

Mrs. S. Well, I think to be'plain about it, you know where my pocket-book is.

Mrs. O. Land o' goodness! Must decent people be accused of stealin' in this way. That comes of kyar ridin'; I might 'a known it! I'll never set foot in a kyar agin' as long as I live. Ma'am, for my part I think you're a little to free gittin' acquainted. I've been watchin' you.

Mrs. S. *Indeed! Your conduct certainly loooks suspicious! It you are innocent allow yourself and your baggage to be searched.*

Mrs. O. Never! You'll never tumble and towse my things around!

Henrietta. She looks guilty. I think she ought to be searched.

Adelaide. I didn't like her appearance from the first.

Mrs. O. Pretty opinions, indeed!

Mrs. S. Will you consent to be searched, or shall we call the police?

Mrs. O. You may call perlice as long as you please, but there'll be no searchin' done. (*Seizes her umbrella.*) I wouldn't break this umbarel for six shillin's, but I'll wear it out over the first one that touches my baggages. To be accused of stealin'—Uriah and I worked for all we have, and we have a plenty too, without stealin' our way on the nasty kyars. *I'm a Pride*, and when the Pride blood is up there 's spunk in it.

Henrietta. Goodness me! *That* is Aunt Oldstyle.

Adelaide. Mercy on us! What a dreadful mistake!

Henrietta. What shall we do?

Mrs. O. Take off that nasty pull-back!

Gertie. Yes cousins, you have made a great mistake, you have mistaken your aunt for a stranger and I fear she is offended. (*Talks aside to Mrs. O.*)

Henrietta. (*To Mrs. S.*) Then who are you, Madam?

Mrs. S. I am the housekeeper your father employed last week.

Adelaide. Dear me, what a mistake!

Henrietta. (*Aside to Adelaide.*) It 's too bad! You know Aunt Oldstyle always intended to leave us a handsome legacy. Now Gertie will secure it sure. See how agreeable she is making herself already.

Adelaide. We must apologize.

Mrs. S. How stupid! There is my pocket-book in my hand-bag! (*To Mrs. O.*) Madam, I'm very sorry, indeed, that I offended you. It was all a mistake

Mrs. O. It's all right, I guess; seein' as there's no harm done, and considerin' I hadn't a very good opinion of you either. (*Looks at Mrs. S.*) And I don't know as I will change my mind in a hurry.

Henrietta. Will you forgive us, dear Aunt? We've made such a blunder and we're so sorry.

Mrs. O. There 's plenty of time to talk that over afterwards. This ain't the place to straighten out family matters.

Henrietta. Oh, dear! She won't forgive us!

Adelaide. But Pa will find out that something is the matter. We're so sorry!

Mrs. O. Well, as for that matter, I guess I'll go and stay with Gertie Plane a day or two first. She's a sister's child. We've always sort o' looked down on the Planes, but Gertie 's a nice child anyhow. Gertie, will you take my carpet-sack, and I'll carry the umbarel and the packages.

Henrietta. Aunt, won't you come to see us at all? Won't you forgive that dreadful mistake?

Mrs. O. (Going L.) Laws a me! yes, I'll forgive the *mistake*, but I'll tell John to teach you better manners. Tell John to send after me in a day or two—and take off them nasty pull-backs, or I won't stay in the house an hour. (*Exit Mrs. O. and Gertie, L.*)

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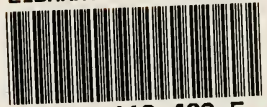
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